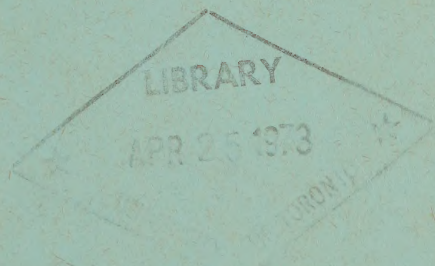


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# public PARTICIPATION IN planning policy AND PROGRAM



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# **public PARTICIPATION IN planning policy AND PROGRAMME**

Prepared for  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BRANCH  
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION

By  
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## FORWARD

The growth of citizen participation no longer needs to be documented. The reality that we are trying to describe by the term 'participation' is all around us, visible and highly audible at political gatherings, student or trade union demonstrations, confrontations with officials of all levels, planning sessions, committee or commission hearings, and at municipal council meetings. The fundamental urge to find one's voice and to have one's say crystallizes round new or old problems and new or old issues, such as pollution, drugs, or city planning. It creates new slogans and new labels such as participatory democracy, mass autocracy or confrontation politics.

Participation takes on a variety of forms, depending upon the actors and the philosophy they are attempting to translate into action. For some, participation means a whole new life-style leading, they hope, into a better world; for others, it is an expression of very specific interests that they intend to promote; for yet others, participation suggests the broadening of existing elites so that power and decisions could be shared in a more equitable way.

The complex subject of participation is discussed here in two different perspectives. Chapters I, II, and III offer a general overview of the historical roots, philosophical ideas and concepts, and experiences gathered in a rather haphazard fashion in the recent years. They sum up, as briefly as possible, what we appear to know about the nature of participation: the hopes and assumptions behind it, the problems and difficulties met in trying to live up to the ideal. As there is fast growing literature on the topics covered in these three chapters, a person who is broadly familiar with the many arguments presented in books and articles published in the last ten years, needs to spend little or no time on this part of the discussion. It is simply an abbreviated introduction for the benefit of those for whom the subject is relatively new or those who may decide to refresh their memory.

The heart of the discussion is in the much longer chapters IV and V, where a detailed model for involving citizens in decision-making, particularly in the daily business of our governments, is presented.

Every person approaches a problem with the help of some model in mind. An economist may use mathematical models, a planner may have recourse to maps and physical models, a decision-maker of any level will, even if unconsciously, fall back upon a mental model of reality as he sees it to help him to choose among the options that he considers available.

A great part of the confusion that still beshrouds the subject of participation is due to the absence of a commonly agreed upon conceptual model. Hence, participation may have — in fact, frequently does have — a different meaning for most of us. To cut through this frustrating ambiguity and to reach at least a beginning of common usage in terminology is, therefore, one of the aims of Chapters IV and V.

A continuum of progressively increasing involvement — through information-feedback, consultation, joint planning to delegated authority — is offered here as a basic model for analysis and discussion. The model, like any other model, is imperfect and unfinished. Its purpose, however, is to engage those who are

already coping with the thrust towards greater participation in a systematic, critical discussion of the issues and problems.

The principal intention of the author has been to take a sharp look at the options available as well as their costs and benefits in both human and material terms. Although deliberately non-academic, such a discussion cannot avoid philosophical and value implications; nor, for evident reasons, can it sidestep political considerations. It is directed very much towards politicians, policy-makers and implementors, planners and administrators — to those, in brief, who live and work with the problems inherent in citizen involvement on a daily basis and who, consequently, will in large measure determine the future of participation in Ontario.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR


FRANCIS BREGHA, Professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, where he studied law and economics immediately after World War II. He completed his studies in economics at Laval University, Quebec, after his arrival in Canada in 1949.

He has been economic adviser to the Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec, lecturer at Laval University, and a frequent participant in C.B.C. public-affairs programmes.

After four years in England, France, and Germany, where he was editor of a European economic journal, he went to South America as regional director for an international programme in economic development. There he 'discovered' community development and started to apply this approach to developmental problems of the Pacific Coast countries.

Since his return to Canada in 1967, he has been teaching at the University of Toronto and acting as a consultant in community development to the Federal Government, as well as several provincial and municipal governments. In addition, he has continued his interest in Latin America, where he now spends several months a year on missions for international development organizations, including the Canadian International Development Agency. He is Canadian representative in several international associations, and an active participant in local community development in Toronto.

He has also been involved in several task forces or commissions, at all three levels of Government, in policy developments related to environmental problems and participatory planning.



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## CHAPTER 1

### THE RISE OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The growth of increased citizen participation must first be put into perspective and understood before its present state can be usefully discussed. It is the motive behind this participation, the spirit and the aspirations of it that, in the end, offer the key to the defining of policies and devising of mechanisms that will permit it to become a vehicle for social progress rather than a confusing and, perhaps, destructive alternative to the present system.

#### a) **Historical Trends**

Citizen participation, as it manifests itself in Ontario at the beginning of the 1970's has, of course, historical roots which are still very much alive. Throughout the past century-and-a-half of our history a common theme is clearly visible: the citizen must be permitted, enabled and eventually encouraged to partake responsibly in the business of government. Hence, campaigns for voting franchise in the nineteenth century; hence a tremendous effort towards universal education; hence a variety of programmes and devices, started in recent years to involve residents in the overall development of the Province. Thus the trend towards increasing involvement and the interpretation of political democracy in the light of changing social and economic conditions has never stopped developing; if anything, it is stronger today, and more sharply perceived than before.

#### b) **Increased Scope**

Nor has this trend remained limited to gradual improvements in the formal machinery and modus operandi of representative democracy. As could be expected, the values of 'one man — one vote' spilled over into the broader area of daily life; so much so, that citizen involvement spread into a rather bewildering variety of situations. In many of them it is now solidly established, such as in the labour movement and similar groups, while in others, such as schools, universities, social service agencies, hospitals and correctional institutions, it is still finding and defining its more permanent role. Moreover, as so many changes in life appear to occur in a disjointed way, citizens organize and strive for ad hoc involvement in urban renewal, city and transportation development schemes and similar situations. In short, the trend towards democratization of public life has many offshoots and the flow of participatory attempts, though it may have started in one major historical current of political thought, has by now become a true meander of many rivers, cross-currents and undercurrents, still increasing in depth and complexity.

#### c) **Rate of Change**

This very complexity of the movement towards participation is related to the changing nature of our society as well as to the quickening rate of change itself. Nowadays, we face not only a succession of probable

futures, but a whole spectrum of possible futures and, therefore, constant conflict over preferable futures. Among the many aspects of this accelerating change is the trend towards an increased role of governments in our lives. Now, as public demands upon governments for more and better services become manifest — and public expenditures inevitably rise — the involved citizen (who first asks and then has to pay for additional services) becomes quite understandably more and more interested in how government decisions are made. This noticeable shift from preoccupation with 'what' the decisions are to 'how' they were reached means in practice greater participation. In many instances, this shift constitutes a forceful motivation in itself, the old 'right to know about decisions' subtly becoming the new 'right to share in decisions'.

This concern for the "process" of decision-making once again is not limited to governments alone. It permeates most of our institutions in all fields and has been the subject of many studies, from the Eighth Annual Review of the Economic Council of Canada to a seemingly endless flow of papers and task force reports, ordered by governments, corporations, educational institutions and churches alike.

#### d) **Planning**

One expression of this interest in the 'how' of decision-making is the current popularity of planning. To be sure, the pace of change sets a high premium on planning activities as, without them, the likelihood of a more controversial and possible destructive change would be greatly enhanced. Traditional and ad hoc reactions to change are less and less acceptable. Reflex responses to problems can often provide unforeseen and often dismaying results. In such a situation, planning as a rational method of problem-solving exercises a powerful attraction on experts and common people alike. Not surprisingly, those who perceive themselves to be affected by specific plans develop a hungry interest in being involved in working them out. Precisely because planning is so intimately linked to the 'how' of modern decision-making, people want to play a role in it, knowing quite well as they do that their influence is best felt at the time when the process is getting under way. In other words, they have discovered that it does not pay to wait for a fait accompli. Nor is this realization merely their own; governments and planning bodies of all kinds are also adapting to the notion that the soundness and political viability of a decision depend to a very high degree upon the form chosen for the planning process itself. It is for this reason that planning will receive so much attention in this discussion.

#### e) **Education**

Reviewing the major factors that set the participatory movement into an historical perspective, there is no doubt that education played a decisive role in contributing to its expansion. It is not simply the effect of so many more people obtaining higher education and the resulting rise in the educational level for the population as a whole, but perhaps even more of



the transformations that took place within the educational system itself. The new philosophy and scope of modern education inevitably orient people towards greater involvement in a wider variety of areas. One could, at the risk of simplifying somewhat, state that this orientation is the one more noticeable aspect of the educational revolution in which we have been living in Ontario during the last decade.

Simultaneously, as our schools are no longer the dominant force in education because of the explosion in knowledge and in communications in general, it is quite evident that travel, all the media, modern popular music, etc. mutually reinforce each other in showing people how to get involved, how to put the newly acquired skills or ideas into practice, how to reach out and 'become part' of a larger human community where the old truth that 'No man is an island' translates itself into a deliberate wish to belong, to play a significant role. This is a rather indirect way of stating the fact that involvement is psychologically fashionable — its value being recognized not only as a basis of modern citizenship but even as a therapeutic or rehabilitative method of treatment.

#### f) **Principles**

The new concept of citizenship, inculcated in schools and strengthened by communications and cultural environment, reflects a few fundamental premises that have been known for a long time. It is also true that few governments attempted to experiment with them, essentially because of the absence of modern technology or the insecurity of the political system. These premises can be summed up:

People respect more those laws on which they have been consulted;

People identify strongly with programmes they have helped to plan;

People perform better in projects they have assisted in setting up.

These three simple observations have been expressed in many ways in the last few years, particularly since most governments have discovered at their own cost the pertinence of a United Nations 1963 report stating:

It is now widely acknowledged that people in their communities can facilitate or frustrate national purposes at many strategic points.

*Economic and Social Council, Ad Hoc Report  
of Community Development Experts, p.5.*

At the same time that the United Nations have been reaching this broad conclusion, a Canadian, Jean H. Legasse, has been summing up his observations of our own scene:

- (a) All persons or groups, no matter how unambitious they may appear on first encounter, have a strong desire to better their condition.
- (b) If they have not been able to noticeably improve their condition, it is because the difficulties which they would have to overcome to achieve this are bigger than the skills and resources at their disposal.
- (c) All persons or groups will take advantage of opportunities of improving their condition once it becomes evident to them that the skills and resources at their disposal are sufficient to enable them to improve their lot and they are allowed to do so on their own terms.

(d) In order to create conditions conducive to (c) above, it is often necessary to influence several spheres of personal and community activities at once. Lack of change in one sphere could prevent changes from occurring elsewhere.

It is the combination of such observations together with the basic values of a democratic society that permits the formulation of new precepts encouraging larger involvement. Although Mr. Legasse's observations apply to the initial days of "community development" in Canada, this method of influencing social change has fast outgrown its original, somewhat narrow focus, of encouraging the development of new skills and the allocation of resources. Particularly in our urban centres, community development learned rather rapidly how to address itself to issues as pressing as those mentioned above. The allocation of assets in our society and the allocation of power in decisions affecting a citizen as an individual became two additional areas of action, where community development, often under different names (such as 'social action' or 'social animation') made its contribution towards the general trend under discussion.

#### g) **Obstacles**

While the convergence of history, social philosophy and practical experience indicate with increasing insistence the desirability of greater participation, the overall trend runs into many concrete obstacles. At the same time, however, these very obstacles bear witness, though indirectly or paradoxically, to the strength of the argument in favour, rather than in disfavour, of broader popular involvement. Here are some of the bigger obstacles:

##### i) **Bureaucratization**

The rapidly progressing growth of ever vaster areas of our lives has brought about an expanding bureaucratization — be it in government, corporations or educational systems. The size and complexity of operations are part of the usual explanation. The other, undoubtedly, is the fidelity to the Weberian model of organization (specialization, rank, merit, criteria for promotion, impersonal performance of duties under clearly defined abstract rules) that sets high value on efficiency and rationality. It does so to such a degree that any involvement by a non-expert, a layman, is made exceedingly difficult. Ironically, the very objectives (efficiency and rationality) of such bureaucratic systems are not always found in their implementation. People laugh while reading "Parkinson's Law" or "The Peter Principle" not only because they admire the wit of the authors but also because their message obviously hits the mark.

The overcoming of the bureaucratic tradition is evidently not easy. The officials and experts frequently concerned feel under unfair attack. They know very well what they are doing, why, and how, and hence, any attempt at participation by self-appointed advisers is keenly resented. To be sure, this participation tends to slow down and

complicate decisions that, in the end, still have to be taken by those who are responsible for them. It also casts doubt on the soundness of objective criteria in favour of confused, frequently emotional standards. In this view, any participation by people from the outside constitutes an unwarranted and futile exercise. Moreover, such a view is perfectly understandable as long as one argues it purely on technical grounds — after all, there is little evidence as yet, if any, that citizen involvement would and could improve the cost-benefit ratio of decision-making over the present Weberian model. We shall return to these arguments later and shall deal with them in more detail.

## **ii) Ambiguity of results**

Another obstacle voiced more often privately than publicly — and by experts, bureaucrats and politicians alike — is the serious doubt among many that participation does in fact accomplish anything visible, tangible, or worthwhile that could not be gotten otherwise in shorter time and at a lower cost. To these critics the assumption that, if enough people who know little or nothing about a problem could be coached into expressing an opinion, a wise decision would automatically follow, sounds unproved and naive. By the yardsticks that they use, the contrary is more likely to be true — and no talk about ‘social indicators’, ‘quality of life’, process versus goal attainment, and what not, appears to them convincing.

## **iii) Attitudes**

Here, we are stereotyping certain attitudes that nevertheless exist and do, in fact, constitute a considerable obstacle to increased citizen involvement.

One should not limit such attitudes only to those who seem to possess the key to the opening of the ‘door to participation’. Among citizens, apathy and alienation produce similar results, however different the cause. The business of decision-making is growing more and more incomprehensible to large segments of our population. Concomitantly, rumours and mistrust distort reality. Particularly among the young, the apparent incomprehensibility of our institutions suggests the need for total, radical change that would presumably simplify them and make them understandable to the common man. Once such an attitude is taken, the problem of involving those who reject the very *raison d’être* of our present institutional arrangement becomes extremely difficult.

## **h) New approaches**

The new attitudes that are emerging in the interaction between citizens and institutions are in many cases far removed from the innocent belief that the political process is self-corrective. Many people no longer write their elected representatives or wait several years to register their opinion in the voting booth. Instead, they tend to engage in immediate action, frequently on the thin line separating public order from anarchy. When

middle-class housewives opt willingly, almost on the spur of the moment, for sit-ins, confrontation with officials or police, there is, indeed, a significant attitudinal change taking place. Inevitably such a general drift casts a real shadow over the long-term survival of representative democracy, unless one finds a meaningful way of rejuvenating it. This becomes even more urgent when one sees how often this politics of aggressive protest appears effective — and we have had several examples of that in Ontario in recent years. This polarization of 'for' and 'against' is prone to simplify many issues in a manner such that no problem is in fact solved in the longer run. To be sure, one can still govern in this new era of social turbulence — but it is doubtful that one can follow any cogent strategy of overall development.

Hence, the perspective in which the problems of popular participation can be situated, is by no means a clear, orderly vision of an irreversible historical trend. The trend is there, its manifestations are multiplying, yet so also are the obstacles that the trend is meeting or provoking. Be it the ire of experts or the anger of the citizens, both are apt to complicate tremendously the task of evolving a society in which the scale and the pace of life encourage a satisfactory level of individual involvement. Participation is quite obviously coming up as an important social goal; yet, its nature, tenor and limits still remain, by and large; to be established.



## CHAPTER II

### THE RESPONSE TO PARTICIPATION

It would be futile to discuss citizen participation in a vacuum, drifting from the extreme position that everyone should be able to participate in everything that may concern him to the opposite extreme that no one has a right to any participation beyond his democratic vote. Both extremes are unrealistic, abstract and rather foolish, though one may still hear the echoes of them in some debates.

#### a) **Frame of reference**

Citizen Participation here is discussed within the context of the relationship between the Government of Ontario and the citizens of Ontario, with the understanding that the first partner includes not only the provincial government but also municipal or regional governments as well as some of the great variety of institutions that presently depend heavily on the government for leadership, funding and legislative mandate. This relationship constitutes an area for participation sufficiently vast for this paper, although it admittedly does not cover all the possibilities because the private institutional sector is left out. The government, even when perceived as a total system in all its ramifications, does not clearly circumscribe the entire arena in which problems related to citizens' involvement become manifest. At the same time, the government's share in the total action is undoubtedly increasing. Moreover, the government finds itself more and more in the position of setting the tone and defining the new rules for participation.

A second important qualification must also be made: in the following discussion, the role of the provincial legislature is left out. Supreme within the limits of its jurisdiction, the legislature obviously incarnates the central concept of representative democracy in Ontario. As such, it transcends the subject of this paper that looks essentially at the relationship between the bureaucracy functioning under the leadership of the Executive Branch and the citizenry at large as it manifests itself in between elections on a daily basis. The omission of the role of the provincial legislature also means that our discussion does not deal with political parties and their specific role in promoting citizen participation in the business of government. Politicians, however, be they in government or in opposition, are very much present as the important actors that they are.

With these two significant limitations in mind, the question being raised here can now be re-phrased: does the present administrative and planning arrangement as represented in the government's structures, policies and procedures make citizen involvement possible? If so, to what degree? Finally, what improvements, if any, can be put forward in order to increase both the quantity and quality of participation?

In this chapter we shall formulate a few general observations first. Without them, the specific suggestions to be considered later on would have little meaning.

## b) **Benefits**

A neglected but fundamental recognition is that participation cannot be imposed or decreed from above. All experience available indicates quite strongly that people get involved only if they can grasp and understand the eventual benefits they may derive from it. Such benefits may be both of "anti" nature (i.e., stopping the government from doing something), or a positive nature (i.e., obtaining a new service) kind. Yet, the benefits must be perceivable, preferably visible and tangible. The same consideration applies to the administrators and planners who also will encourage involvement (both from within the government and from the outside) only insofar as such an activity can assist them in reaching sounder and more effective decisions.

## c) **Reciprocity**

Although there will be a great variety of motives ranging from those persons who will declare their readiness to participate because they are prompted by their sense of civic duty or philosophical outlook, to those people who will not mince words about the personal advantage they are expecting — there is a universal need for finding a reward, either material or spiritual, from the engagement in participation. Moreover, in spite of the variety of motives — and eventual rewards — there must be no clear or perceivable imbalance in the benefits. As some people have already put it: "I participate, you participate . . . *they* profit." Such a conjugation of the verb addresses itself simply to the fact that involvement ought to be of mutual benefit, and that, therefore, an implicit reciprocity must be maintained.

## d) **Participation by invitation**

Hence, it becomes important who takes initiative and how. Governments, by tradition and structure, tend to practise 'participation by invitation'. The citizen, on the other hand, because of lack of experience or knowledge, is apt to get 'involved' in a hit and miss fashion, chiefly around an issue in which he has a heavy emotional commitment. Both these approaches make responsible and constructive participation exceedingly difficult. Evidently, there is no room for reciprocity, nor is there any clear understanding of the respective roles of citizens and public officials.

While the question as to who takes initiative can be answered pragmatically in the sense that either government or the citizens can start the process, depending upon the nature of the issue or problem, it is most likely that it will be government who will be doing so with increased frequency, both as a matter of policy and efficiency.

With more initiative forthcoming from government, the traditional concept of 'participation by invitation' needs to be re-examined. Its criticism has been slight from among those of professional middle-class citizens who, up to now, have constituted the bulk of the invited participants in the many task forces, commissions, etc. On the other hand, various groups

in our society, particularly the young, the Indians, the poor and some ethnic groups, have begun branding this concept as an attempt at co-optation, an exercise in diffusing the issues through the manipulation of a few of their 'representatives'. This criticism, expressed frequently in strong and negative terms, often leads to the eventual collapse of dialogue. Often then, those groups that consider themselves underprivileged, left out, or oppressed, will resist 'participation by invitation' as long as they see in it a mechanism for preserving the same power arrangements that segregated these groups into subordinate positions in the first place. In short, the fact that 'participation by invitation' is unacceptable to several segments of our society may seriously affect the current process of democratic decision-making.

#### e) **Participation through negotiation**

One way around this difficulty would be to adopt a policy of 'participation through negotiation'. Because governments can relatively easily define the terms of participation in the light of their own objectives, it is essential to approach the problem from a different angle. Not only the objectives themselves, but also the ways through which participatory structures are set up at the government's initiative, could be open to a preliminary negotiating effort in which both parties sit together and work out the terms of reference for their common undertaking. It is clear that this approach would have to be implemented with a minimum of preconceived or rigid notions, experimented with rather flexibly in a wide variety of forms, and permitting of different degrees of commitment. Specifically, certain cultural traits would have to be taken into account and recognized as legitimate expressions of a pluralistic society's varying life styles. A change in some of the approaches of the representatives of the institutional sector might also be needed, as many of the means they are presently using for involving outsiders (i.e., types of meetings, procedures, reporting) would not necessarily be equally applicable with regard to all citizen groups.

The point has been frequently made that through its diversified structures (departments, branches, sections, etc.), the government tends to mirror the variety of economic and social interests in our community. Some authors, however, suggest that there exists a permanent, mutually advantageous relationship between public bureaucracies and "established" interests. In this perspective then, it would seem important to be concerned about the comprehensiveness of such an administrative pattern. While an all-inclusive strategy may appear somewhat Utopian, the need for effectively involving new and highly heterogeneous groups remains a valid political and social objective. The proposed 'participation through negotiation' indicates one way of achieving it, while, at the same time, significantly enhancing the overall feasibility of popular involvement.

It is also worthwhile to note that most procedures for decision-making do, often predetermine the outcome. The type of decision made inevitably depends on whether one approaches the problem to be solved in a

cost/benefit perspective, a social development perspective, or a systems analysis perspective. Obviously each procedure has its phase but the improper use of any technique can produce dismal results. In short, the technical aspects of decision-making must be subordinate to policies. This then leads to the conclusion that procedural arrangements, playing as they do an increasingly important role in decision-making, should, therefore, be open to negotiation wherever priority (because of policy) is given to citizen involvement.

A last 'caveat' should be added to the discussion of 'participation through negotiation'. Involvement of a specific citizen group that has been negotiated around a particular problem area may easily tend to institutionalize itself and become more or less permanent. Hence, the very concept of 'participation through negotiation' suggests strongly the need for periodical review of the initial frame of reference, lest it, too, become exclusive or artificial.

#### **f) Accessibility**

If, as stated, a goal of the Government of Ontario is "creating flexible, viable structures that can incorporate rapid change" (Hon. Robert Welch) without omitting any important segment of society affected by it, the question of feasibility becomes very much a question of accessibility to the inner workings of the administrative or planning systems. Whereas total accessibility would lead to a system's overload and possible collapse of the structure under the stress, no accessibility means very much a secret rule of the few over the many. Hence, the degree of accessibility and the mechanisms for making a maximum use of it become important in each specific situation. There are fortunately several ways of establishing guidelines for this problem's solution that will be dealt with in detail further on.

#### **g) Rationality**

Among the analysts of large organizations, an argument has been advanced many a time that the central values of modern bureaucracies (rationality, control, efficiency, technical planning) make accessibility (sometimes called responsiveness in this context) more and more unlikely as the very ethos of popular involvement tends to dilute these values. Technological rationality, in short, excludes by its very nature any significant degree of citizen participation. Yet, as H. P. Wilson pointed out in "The Dismal Science of Organization Reconsidered" (*Canadian Public Administration*, Spring 1971, p.99):

More significant by far is the larger question of whether the changes that large organizations are presently under-going, will serve human needs for participating in meaningful and creative endeavour by serving the interests of technical and organizational rationality.

The conflict between the bureaucratic and participatory values that can be identified in general terms may, indeed, be more apparent than real. In final analysis the reconciliation of the seemingly contradictory values is a matter for government policy. Its thrust in Ontario has definitely been



towards setting a priority on popular involvement within the overall concept of social development. For this reason, the technological rationality should not be seen in isolation, propelled by its own inherent laws, but rather as a part of a broader, political view. The re-interpretation of these presumably automatically operating bureaucratic values in the light of political and social objectives becomes then the decisive factor in determining the feasibility of increased participation.

## CHAPTER III

### PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF PARTICIPATION

After having briefly described the historical trends and some general considerations that encourage or hinder further growth of citizen involvement in Ontario, we can now look in a pragmatic way at some practical problems.

#### a) **Definition**

First, we need a definition of participation that is sufficiently broad to cover the great variety of participatory acts that are already open to Ontario's citizens. Adapting Verba's discussion of democratic participation, we can say that at the observable, empirical level, we are dealing with all acts that are intended to influence the attitudes and behaviour of those who are empowered to make decisions. In other words, wherever a public official has some discretion in the handling of a situation, be it in the interpretation of laws or in the application of programmes, such an official can be influenced from the outside, by individuals or groups concerned.

Because of the increasing complexity of governmental operations, the accelerating flow of new legislation and new programmes, such discretionary decision-making powers are to be found at more and more points within the governmental bureaucracy. Moreover, as the government does more for citizens, the citizens' stake increases, too. Special groups who have become dependent on specific government benefits or programmes are fast finding out that it pays to have a voice in determining policy or its implementation.

At the same time, administrators and planners become more and more aware of two resources they need for a successful performance of their tasks: information and support. While they may hesitate in abandoning or trading off some part of the autonomy they have enjoyed in their discretionary decision-making, they can also see the value of feed-back and of positive reaction on the part of the public they serve.

Thus, these two sets of practical considerations push both officials and citizens towards greater involvement in each other's business. This is more likely to happen in regard to new programmes and new issues — where new groups of people wish to get involved in a new way. This combination of new factors, acting simultaneously on the scene, is also apt to put considerable stress on traditional ways of operating.

Several variables then become important:

#### b) **The ways of influencing decisions**, first of all.

Although one can mention numerous means through which decisions are already influenced, from passive to aggressive means — from writing letters to occupation of offices — the observable fact is that these ways are multiplying, many taking an unprecedented aspect that forces officials to react in a manner that may be distasteful to them or goes beyond the

limits of their discretionary power. In both cases, such confrontation with new, unexpected ways of applying pressure tends to be troublesome.

c) **The centralization or decentralization of decision-making.**

If there is only one place where decisions are made and it becomes known as such, it will inevitably bear the brunt of more attempts to influence it. On the other hand it may be that if substantial decentralization prevails, then the ways of influencing decisions will be heterogeneous, in varying degrees of intensity, with a greater probability of conflict resolution and a better chance of finding means of citizen involvement.

d) **The presence or absence of channels for involvement.**

New means of influencing decisions also require new channels — hence, the need for adaptable appeal mechanisms or for modified procedures at meetings or hearings as the tactics of citizens change. Accessibility of decision-makers and their procedures will continue to be questioned until a mutually acceptable new channel for conflict resolution is defined in a specific situation. Failure to do so would likely sharpen confrontation, create further alienation and a concomitant loss of faith in the system — and, hence, a serious decrease in its efficiency.

e) **The presence or absence of resources for involvement.**

Once a policy is adopted expressing the desirability of greater participation in what used to be dealt with through autonomous decision-making, resources have to be freed for its implementation. A frequent error is to imagine that involvement has no cost. In fact, the time, expertise, and energy of the citizen that will be required deserve remuneration and these costs must be planned and provided for. One should also take into account how the new involvement will affect the activities of the administrators or planners and establish the expenditures required. One can engage in both these sets of calculations without trying to put the benefits expected from larger involvement down in dollars and cents. Yet, to be able to project ahead would appear to be the best way of justifying the costs of such an approach.

f) **Frame of reference**

Having made these introductory observations about the practical aspects of participation, as broadly defined at the beginning, we should address ourselves to the delineation of the frame of reference within which specific problems are arising. In general terms, there are two areas where the provincial government and the citizens of Ontario are presently interacting and experimenting with different forms of participation:

- (a) Government and environment (i.e., land use, urban renewal, transportation, pollution, parks, regional planning, etc.);
- (b) Government services and their delivery (i.e., education, health, community services, welfare, public housing, recreation, etc.).

This classification, is, of course, not all-inclusive but it serves the purpose of suggesting the limits of two distinct areas where most of the attempts at improving the participatory mechanisms are presently taking place.

Within these two areas, citizen participation is related to the two following sets of government activities and responsibilities:

(a) Policy formulation and planning;

(b) Administration and programme implementation (i.e., delivery of services).

Again, this simplified classification is being offered simply to circumscribe the discussion.

Finally, let us assume that the various techniques for encouraging participation at the government's disposition can be broadly grouped as follows:

(a) Information and feed-back;

(b) Consultation;

(c) Joint planning;

(d) Delegated authority.

We shall deal with each separately in the next chapter. In the meantime, the frame of reference as here developed, permits us to illustrate in a clearer manner the practical aspects of participation. Looking back at the last few years it is possible to tabulate the experience gathered and to pinpoint the problem areas that deserve further study.

It should be pointed out that our experience with the participatory approach is still relatively limited and that tables 1 and 2 merely attempt to sum what we have learned from some well-known situations such as the Spadina Expressway and Trefann Court urban renewal programme. Examples such as these show clearly how cost could have been reduced or avoided, and faster and sounder decisions reached, had the participatory approach been used from the beginning. Nevertheless such an admission does not invalidate the usefulness of reviewing the salient characteristics of both approaches as they evolved historically in order to identify those aspects that could and should be improved.

The third table suggests a theoretical model for increased application of participatory techniques within the limits of present legislation. The implementation and handling of problems arising from this model, therefore, relate directly to the current administrative responsibilities of the public servant.



TABLE 1

**GOVERNMENT: ENVIRONMENT + SERVICES  
EXPERIENCE WITH NON-PARTICIPATORY APPROACH**

Type of Activity	Understanding among Citizens	Time + Resources Required	Political Aspects	Effectiveness
Policy Formulation and Planning	Low to Nil	Time: generally long as no urgency created by involvement of outsiders; disagreements among experts cause delays. Resources; average to minimum.	Open to appeals and controversy; low cost/benefit in case of passive accep- tance; high cost in case of unpopular policies; diffi- cult to predict because of lack of consultation.	Average to low; tending to become complex and difficult to measure.
Administration, Programme Implementation	Viewed with resignation and suspicion, resulting in; non-cooperation.	Tend to be minimized, though frequent delays occur for internal reasons.	Neutral in general; can be disrupted or paralyzed by organized opposition.	High within the system; low to average outside.

TABLE 2

**GOVERNMENT: ENVIRONMENT + SERVICE  
EXPERIENCE UP-TO-DATE WITH PARTICIPATORY APPROACH**

Type of Activity	Understanding among Citizens	Time + Resources Required	Political Aspects	Effectiveness
Policy Formulation and Planning	Average to high, depending on participatory technique used and inputs of time and resources.	Generally long period; variety of resources required. More so if bargaining used to set up a frame of reference for involvement.	Positive if mutual trust maintained; negative if involvement used for manipulation. Feedback into politics offers support or predictability of reactions.	Generally high because based on cooperative acceptance.
Administration, Programme Implementation	Same as above.	Generally fast to average, with feedback and on-going evaluation influencing daily administration.	Same as above.	High within and without the institutional system.

**TABLE 3**  
**APPLICABILITY OF PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES**

	APPLICABILITY OF PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES			
	Information + Feedback	Consultation	Joint Planning	Delegated Authority
Policy Formulation and Planning ENVIRONMENT	High; requires diversity of inputs; mechanisms for research + analysis + interpretation.	High; requires time + resources; negotiated frame of reference; highly motivated citizen constituency.	Average; high in urban renewal; diminishes with amount of expertise required; serves to reconcile adverse interests among groups.	Seldom applicable; if so, applicability greater at local level, diminishing with size of territory and groups.
	High applicability; feedback requires standardized procedures and high motivation among citizens concerned.	Both highly facilitated in case of successful non-controversial outcome, in opposite case nature of appeals predictable.	Enhances effectiveness; facilitates evaluation, lowers political and administrative costs.	Applicable at local or small size levels — with clear lines of accountability.
Policy Formulation and Planning SERVICES	Same as above; plus detailed assessment of needs as perceived by potential clientele; feedback on quality of service enhances effectiveness.	Same as above plus permanent mechanisms and channels for policy review.	Same as above; plus permanent planning boards in certain service areas, combining experts and laymen (clients).	Applicable locally where little or no expertise required; generally applicable where self-help and volunteers are used.
	Feedback important for evaluation of effectiveness; facilitates adaptation of services, better use of resources.	Advisory bodies slow down daily decision-making but improve quality and relevance of services.	Higher efficiency; better cost/benefit; easier evaluation; faster implementation.	Requires mechanism for accountability — no direct administration involved; supportive services may be necessary.

## CHAPTER IV

### PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES

The techniques presently available to government have been grouped into four broad and general categories: information-feedback; consultation; joint planning, delegated authority. It is important to see them on a continuum, one building upon the foundations of the previous one. Thus, to engage effectively in joint planning it becomes necessary to make sure that channels for information-feedback have been established and mechanisms for on-going consultation devised. As, rather frequently, different departments or branches utilize different techniques, it becomes necessary to set up prior internal co-ordination as well. This amounts to saying that participatory techniques in the hands of government will work out well only if, within that government, there are shared objectives for their use and a carefully co-ordinated process for putting them into practice. As experience accumulates and the extent to which participatory techniques are used increases, it will become necessary to create a permanent, internal mechanism for maintaining consistency at the policy level and for constantly improving co-ordinating procedures.

#### A. Information-Feedback

The significance of information has been recognized for quite some time, though it is only recently that the provincial government opted for a more innovative approach to this field. In April 1970, the Honourable Robert Welch made the following announcement:

"Certainly an important aspect of citizen participation involves the awareness on the part of the citizens themselves of the services and facilities available to them in their own community and province, and it is our intention to investigate the role which the Provincial Government might play in making this information more readily available on a community level".

The Ontario Community Development Branch published in December 1971 a report called "Partners in Information" that examines in detail the practical aspects of the functioning of community information centres in Ontario and came up with several specific recommendations, including one for an expanded support of these services by government.

The above-mentioned study does not cover, however, all aspects of the problem. It analyzes one instrument and documents its increasing importance. On the other hand, it does not go into other means that are at the government's disposal which could considerably improve both the quality and the quantity of information-feedback required by a modern, responsive government oriented towards greater citizen involvement.

What is needed most is the recognition that information-feedback are two faces of the same coin from a government's point of view. They must be used together, instead of in isolation, and in a way where one will support and reinforce the other. Here are some practical observations indicating how such a result could be achieved.

The government is already engaged in directly distributing substantive amounts of information about legislation, services, benefits or programmes.

Nevertheless, much of this information is fragmented, sometimes poorly presented and frequently inaccessible to those who would need it most. Moreover, information put out for specific groups (immigrants, aged, etc.) often has the unwanted result of isolating such groups from the rest of society and of offering a distorted view on the totality of government's policies. Hence, it would seem advisable to downplay the use of leaflets, brochures, etc. that are narrowly focused and intended for a specific clientele in favour of more comprehensive literature offering a broader picture of government's objectives, functioning and programmes in a given policy field. There would still be a variety in style of presentation; yet, the more general perspective suggested here might lead to more meaningful feedback from the total community. The interpretative function that the news media possess in regard to explaining government's policies and programmes would not be curtailed in any way. In fact, the level of critical analysis applied to government's activities should improve with the use of more comprehensive basic information.

If, indeed, a more meaningful feedback is to become the aim of most information directly released by the government, then a variety of new techniques will have to be applied more intensively. In particular, instead of engaging in community surveys (a la Gallup Poll), the approach of action research would become preferable as it involves the people concerned more deeply in defining a problem and in discussing the feasibility of different options for its solution. Also, instead of the use of audio-visual productions for the purpose of publicizing programmes or benefits, the approach pioneered in Canada by the National Film Board in its Challenge for Change series would offer more relevant results for the consideration of policy-makers and administrators. Finally, ad hoc conferences between civil servants and the interested citizens at large could be organized around specific problem areas with the aim of facilitating direct feedback.

Related to these considerations is the obvious fact that there is an inevitable time lag between the offering of information and the soliciting of feedback. In short, people require time and resources to state their opinion cogently and constructively. Therefore, as feedback receives higher priority, the government should become ready to invest some of its resources in new equipment and new methods that would encourage citizens to take a look at their situation and, more specifically then, at how government's policies and programmes are affecting them. They can then come up with a documented, well articulated response. The experience obtained with social development demonstrates the usefulness of these new approaches.

One important benefit that government would receive from improved means of facilitating feedback would be the knowledge required for bettering its approach to information. As long as the latter remains essentially a one-way street, there is no possibility of assessing its real effectiveness. Therefore, as its significance and costs keep growing, it becomes increasingly important to measure its true impact.

Once such an evaluation becomes feasible on the basis of generalized and encouraged feedback, government would also be in the position of establishing clearer policies about the best use of the information channels available, such as



Information Offices, Community Information Centres, Libraries, Community Schools, Community Cable TV, Educational TV etc. Though all these channels are here presently, their potential remains by and large to be determined.

Finally, it should be underlined that while information does increase the motivation for involvement, it does not, per se, offer an opportunity for it. To receive relevant information may be tremendously helpful but represents, nevertheless, a passive act. Feedback is reactive and only part of a participation process.

In a society where new technology has greatly increased the ways and means of communicating, the responsibility of government to ensure that information-feedback systems are used in the public interest is also constantly growing. This does not mean that the organized, highly structured news media do not consider the public good in their vast daily output; nevertheless, playing such an overwhelming role in the field of communications as they do and having to operate within an economic system that equates survival with profitability, our society cannot rely on them alone for the establishment and control of an information-feedback two-way flow required for social development. In short, the dual function of information-feedback is very much within the responsibility of our political institutions since upon its effective performance depends the feasibility of other forms of citizen involvement that, of necessity, have to build on its existence.

## **B. Consultation**

Here we are referring to the situation in which government officials meet with citizens in a planned, structured way for the purpose of increasing the scope of popular participation in decision-making. Those instances where government hires outside consultants are, therefore, excluded from this discussion. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that in the process of consultation as defined here the roles and the responsibilities of the interlocutors are substantially different. Uneven and dissimilar though they may be in substance and in degree, there is an implicit understanding that both parties have something to contribute and are doing so to mutual benefit. Such an understanding must then be made explicit in the process itself.

Consultation is best applicable to those situations where facts-as-perceived are as important as, or more important than, facts-as-they-are. Therefore, it is particularly relevant with those segments of our society who manifest feelings of being misunderstood, under-privileged or discriminated against. In those instances, what people believe to be the case is more revealing than what technicians can say about the case, both politically and socially. Consultation nevertheless has a broader application, specifically in relation to services offered by governments, and wherever policies and settings encourage a movement towards more complex forms of citizen participation, such as joint planning or delegated authority.

There are two sets of crucial variables in consultation: agreement on the objectives of the process itself and the attitudes of the participants. As for the first set, the clarity of objectives is a pre-condition for deciding their acceptability to mutual benefit. For that reason, it is recommended that

negotiations about objectives start at the beginning of the process so that a frame of reference can be devised that will be understood by all participants. This preliminary step is often ignored, producing numberless frustrations and possible conflicts that may completely hinder the effectiveness of the process.

As for the attitudes of the participants, these will be influenced significantly by the outcome of preliminary negotiations. If the latter have not been undertaken prior to the beginning of formal consultations, attitudes acquire even higher importance. The burden of disciplining one's attitudes will invariably rest with government officials. Their inside knowledge, their closer proximity to final decision-makers, their higher skills and expertise have to be used in a restrained way, in carefully measured doses, and displayed with great self-discipline if the consultative group is to establish basic trust among its members and operate with respect for the principle of reciprocity.

As for the mechanics of setting the consultative process in motion, we already have considerable experience with Royal Commissions, public hearings, White Papers, various task forces and such. This experience needs now to be carefully analyzed in order to improve the quality and the effectiveness of the process. For instance, it is quite obvious that while considerable time and resources go into enabling provincial bodies to engage in research, to hire expertise, etc., relatively little attention has been paid to increasing the quality of the citizen input. Those citizens who are organized and possess their own funds (professional associations, trade unions, business groups) possess a definite advantage over those who have to act as individuals and at their own expense. The consultative process is then slanted in favour of organized pressure groups, frequently defending vested interests. Many segments of the population whose interest is as legitimate and often as immediate may be left out completely. To ensure a true representation and to establish as great an equality of opportunity as possible becomes a high priority for anyone interested in the fullest possible use of consultation.

A common error often committed, yet truly inexcusable, consists in engaging in consultation via the "either-or" approach. This implies the presentation of limited alternatives with no flexibility for discussion.

The 'either-or' options can in fact arise in any situation where government declares its own stand at the outset. The public reaction then tends to split into clearly distinguishable 'for' and 'against' groups. This polarization is the almost inevitable outcome and the very purpose of consultation is vitiated. Consultation makes sense only when improvement in the suggested policy, programme, or legislation is truly open for discussion. Hence, by assuming, even tacitly, the attitude of 'take it or leave it' authorities deprive themselves of the possible benefits of consultation.

This point is linked to the frequent suspicion among people that consultations are used by governments as a smoke-screen for legitimizing something that, since the beginning, was a 'fait accompli'. Those who take part in such pseudo-consultation understandably resent what to them amounts to an abuse of confidence and are likely to become active opponents of the final decision. For this reason, it is essential that those who willingly and openly participate in a consultation process be able to recognize the influence of their contribution;

even when their thoughts have to be discarded or their opinions fail to prevail. They should be able to see how they affected the decision reached, whatever it is.

A frequent impediment to effective consultation between officials and citizens is their differing priorities. Typically, citizens will set principles first and feasibility second; officials will as likely value technical soundness and practical aspects as highly as philosophical considerations. Whatever the difference may be, it is well to anticipate it and to bring it into the open during the negotiations regarding the frame of reference and the procedures for consultations.

This continuing insistence on negotiating prior to consulting also takes into account the need for greater flexibility and greater imagination in the use of the process. Many of the formal, traditional ways (i.e., public hearings, committees, Royal Commissions) unnecessarily undercut their effectiveness because they appear unreliable, indifferent or even antagonizing to some segments of our population. In a multi-ethnic society such as we have in Ontario, cultural differences — and preferences — have to be acknowledged by public authorities so that every group may develop the conviction that its opinions are requested and respected. This acknowledgement can best be reflected by the arrangements the officials make for entering the process of consultation which will ensure accommodation of the deep feelings of their interlocutors. The more accommodating, the better the process.

One point deserves special mention — the costs involved in consultation. Once this method is adopted as a matter of policy and the decision is taken to apply it to a greater variety of situations, the costs might easily turn up as unexpectedly high. In the public's mind, there is an ambivalence on the subject: commissions, task forces, etc., are criticized for the amounts of money and time spent, especially if the public fails to see any connection between their work and eventual policy formulation by government. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the public wishes to be consulted on an increasing number of issues — regardless of cost. Within governmental bureaucracies, consultation puts an additional burden upon a relatively small group of higher officials. Most often, their time and energy have simply not been 'budgeted' in consequence. It is therefore important to establish as clearly as possible what the required investment may be. As the results of the consultation process are so closely linked to the sharing of information and expertise available, its cost should be carefully assessed. The process itself will absorb time and energy on the part of the participants, resources have to be mobilized and 'costed' to sustain and to reward them. Officials will have to be freed from their normal duties to engage in consultation and arrangements have to be made and paid for that will enable them to do so. The more these matters become public knowledge and the more they are spelled out in the initial negotiations, the better will governments be able to understand the true costs and benefits of consultation and the present ambivalence among the public at large is likely to become less.

An open approach to the question of costs should, finally, illuminate the relative effectiveness of a variety of consultative techniques available and guide the governments in their use.

### C. Joint Planning

Within the context of the continuum of participatory techniques, joint planning describes a situation in which officials and citizens assume essentially equal roles and responsibilities in the process of comprehensive or specific problem-solving. This description does not suggest that such joint planning bodies would have decision-making powers. On the other hand, it goes beyond the stipulation of the Ontario Planning Act (RSO 1960, Section 10-(1)-(b)) which states that "every planning board shall . . . hold public meetings and publish information for the purpose of obtaining the participation and co-operation of the inhabitants of the planning area in determining the solution of problems or matters affecting the development of the planning area." The citizen involvement foreseen by the Act remains within the scope of our first participatory technique (Information-Feedback) with some elements of the second (consultation). In this analysis, however, we are dealing with a type of citizen involvement that is authorized, promoted and implemented on the basis of equality. Moreover, whereas the Act addresses itself to land-use planning (physical planning), our analysis is of a broader type as it includes both environment and services.

Where is such an approach applicable? Generally in those areas and situations where citizens involved do not require specific technical expertise but possess the ability to articulate clearly the needs, aspirations and potential reactions of their constituencies. More specifically, joint planning will be effective where users, consumers, or clients of governmental services can be put on the planning bodies as full members. As the concern with environment increases and the new concept of 'quality of life', squarely based upon the combination of physical and social considerations, attracts more attention, it is to be expected that opportunities for joint planning will become apparent in a variety of new areas.

The advantage of joint planning over the first two participatory techniques is obvious: it can and must pursue Information-Feedback and consultation in a greater depth, within a more structured procedural context, thus providing guidance of higher quality for decision-makers. In so doing, it also creates more opportunities for deeper and personally more meaningful citizen involvement. In more than one sense it elevates people to the status of partners in an important part of government's business. Consequently, it can make governmental decision-making both more acceptable and effective.

Although one can distinguish between long-term citizen involvement in joint planning (particularly in regard to services where there is an on-going need for their adaptation, evaluation, etc.) and short-term involvement (such as in urban renewal, i.e., Trefann Court), it is within this second category that most unused opportunities seem to exist. By multiplying their occurrence, one can both broaden the number of citizens involved, and diminish the burden on each of them that normally goes with assuming a quasi-permanent role.

There is no need to repeat once more the argument in favour of negotiating first the frame of reference and the agreement on mutually acceptable objectives. One should stress, however, that such a negotiation is particularly important in regard to joint planning and should, therefore, never be omitted. Its



absence encourages a possible distortion of the process and greatly diminishes its usefulness. In order to engage in such negotiations, it is necessary to seek out organized citizen groups — or to encourage their formation — in the interest of greater representation. This does not mean that knowledgeable or concerned individuals who are not members of such groups should be left out of this planning process. Their participation, however, should be seen as complementary to appointed or elected representatives of groups. As the number of interested groups may be many, it is worthwhile to use the negotiation for establishing greater dialogue among them so that they will take up their role in the planning body with sufficient understanding of their differing interests and positions. This would also help to avoid the polarization which often occurs when different groups within the community disagree on issues or their solutions.

Representation in joint planning may be increased in other ways. The official planning body may multiply opportunities for involvement by setting up various linkages into the administrative system and into the community. Task forces, workshops, conferences, informal meetings or public hearings can be used flexibly, particularly in regard to citizens living in a defined locale or who share a common interest. This type of activity (information-feedback and consultation on our continuum) improves the quality of the planning process and permits the broadening of its scope as required. So long as the general question: "What is a right size of a special unit for effectively solving a specific kind of problem?" cannot be answered with any precision, we have to proceed pragmatically and to experiment. The idea, then, of perceiving the official planning body as the top of a pyramid, with many linkages into the community and into public administration at lower levels of problem-solving activity, suggests one way of coping with an issue that our thinking about participatory democracy has found, by and large, particularly frustrating.

The application of the idea of broadening representation through the involvement of many small groups (some technical, some mixed, some strictly of the citizenry at large) brought into the planning process in a flexible way and using a variety of problem-solving settings and methods, would most likely contribute to another important aspect of making participatory democracy work. Instead of producing one single plan for the decision-makers to consider, the planning process could be re-oriented from its present unitary nature towards the goal of preparing several options, with their advantages, costs, benefits and probable effects, clearly stated.

The desirability of avoiding the pitfalls of the 'either-or' approach has already been discussed. While encouraging planning authorities to multiply the opportunities for involving representatives of the public, we not only increase the reliability of data gathered but are also enabled to test a variety of possible solutions. For the decision-makers to receive then several proposed plans for action augments the likelihood of selecting the best one since they can evaluate the respective merits of each and consider the political alternatives with greater knowledge of actual reality. More specifically, because there is always a time lag between the start of a planning process and the situation to which an approved plan is going to be applied, the study of more than one carefully weighed option enhances the possibility of an up-to-date response to changed circumstances.



There is little doubt that joint planning as analyzed here would require a re-definition of the role of the professional or the expert in the planning process. If, indeed, those who are going to be affected by the outcome of governmental planning activities are to receive a greater say in spelling out what the problems are and what types of solutions appear most desirable or acceptable to them, then it is inevitable that the professional expertise of the planner should be seen in a different light. While some theoreticians suggest that the planner be perceived simply as a resource person, or, at best, as an advocate of a specific point of view, the situation here in Ontario appears less rigid and with more practical possibilities. One alternative would be to define the professional planner's role in terms of a consultant to the group of administrators and citizen representatives that compose it. As a modification of this alternative, either of the two sub-groups could use permanent or ad hoc planners as consultants, although in case of conflict such a modification would quite likely produce unnecessary confusion and procrastination. The second alternative, of course, is to admit professional planners to full membership on the planning bodies, with those who also happen to be civil servants included in the government's sub-group and those who are in private practice forming part of the citizens' sub-group. Once more, an experimentation with a pragmatic approach would be required before the adoption of firm policies.

The matter of costs and resources needed for putting joint planning into effect is still open to argument. It is rather evident that a relatively high investment in both would be the rule. On the other hand, the savings could also be considerable if incidents such as the halted construction of the Spadina Expressway could be avoided. Moreover, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the loss suffered when plans have to be shelved when they become so controversial that legal counter-measures are taken to stop their implementation. Finally, until we have better yardsticks for evaluating the effectiveness of government provided services, it is fair to assume that the costs and resources required for joint planning might be largely offset by the improved quality, co-ordination and general appropriateness of services offered.

Joint planning cannot be fully utilized unless considerable effort is made to bring the process into the open, where it is accessible and in which can be developed a spirit of co-operation and compromise.

#### **D. Delegated Authority**

As the term indicates, this refers to the situation in which government transfers some of its authority and responsibility to a private group of citizens. We are not dealing with the purchasing or contracting out for certain services or activities or with supporting, totally or in part, certain private agencies. In this last instance, the distinction may, indeed, be a tenuous one as our analysis will demonstrate. The type of delegated authority envisioned here must be seen within the context of the continuum of participatory techniques already discussed; it is therefore, built upon the sound foundation of the first three.

In this perspective, there are as yet very few and rather atypical examples. On the other hand, the potential for applying the concept is much vaster than would appear at first sight. In general terms, delegated authority can be conceived as

applicable to those services, programmes and facilities where (a) there is an element of self-help or mutual aid (community development, environmental improvements, certain forms of co-operatives); (b) the level of expertise is widely available because of education or experience (services in home-making, home improvements, consumer affairs, day-care, information and referral, general counselling, etc.); (c) the administration of facilities can be entrusted to groups of users (recreation, culture, sports, youth and leisure activities); and (d) the service, programme or activity can be offered in relatively small quantities (usually serving a neighbourhood or small territory) so that the participants are effectively able to partake both in their use and in their control.

At the same level of generality, one may formulate a rule of thumb: delegated authority is applicable only where services and programmes can be set up on a people-to-people basis, with government funding, consulting and co-ordination. In those instances, the services and programmes might be significantly cheaper and more effective than when offered through traditional methods.

Those who hesitate to experiment with broadly-based application of delegated authority usually cite two problems. The first one centres on the question of dependency. If, in fact, a government yields for a period of time some of its authority in favour of a citizen group, does the latter not become dependent upon the government? Is there a danger of eventually evolving a network of para-governmental services, programmes and activities that, in reality, would possess exceedingly limited freedom of action since they would operate with public funds and within government policy guidelines? If government tended to impose standards of performance and rigid accountability, what chance would there be for citizens' initiative, participation and control? Is there a danger that such a body could become another agency that is between the citizen and his government? These are important questions to which a government dedicated to increased citizen involvement in its business may give concrete responses.

The fundamental requirement for doing so is the development of flexible, enabling and facilitating policies within the government. Instead of prescribing what and how it should be done, policies would encourage initiatives from the public and respond to them within very broad guidelines. We have examples of such approaches in the federal LIP and OFY programmes based on this principle.

In reacting to initiatives from citizens, authority is delegated in the first instance for the purpose of demonstrating the viability of the experiment. Hence, funding is through a demonstration grant. While supportive services may be offered, the citizen group is left very much on its own to make its point. This innovative and pragmatic initial approach culminates in a mutually agreed upon evaluation, whose principles are worked out in detail at the beginning. If the results are positive, then the delegated authority may become a long-term one and the ad hoc demonstration grant would be replaced by statutory funding.

The obligation to avoid unhealthy dependency is incumbent upon both partners in the undertaking. It is the government, nonetheless, that is in a much better position to make sure that the issue will not arise. It has both the ways and means for doing so, without compromising its ultimate responsibility for withdrawing its authority in case of a serious breach in the understanding between the two parties. In order to minimize such incidents, the government

should refrain from imposing models or formulae, but rather facilitate experimentation and innovation for a sufficiently long period of time. From such an approach, experience would grow in each of the many areas of delegated authority's applicability, thus permitting frequent up-dating of policies.

As no authority would be specifically delegated unless government and citizens went together through an intensive period of joint planning, the danger of possible dependency would unavoidably be articulated and brought into the open early enough to make both partners aware of the problems involved. Also, steps would have to be taken to ensure that the program remained open to citizen input and adaptable to changing needs.

The second reason for the above-mentioned hesitation is the difficult question of accountability. How can the government be sure that public funds will not be wasted? The answer, of course, is that it cannot. After all, as our governments keep growing, they find it increasingly difficult to offer such assurance about their own direct spending, not to mention that of schools, hospitals, universities, to name only a few, where the same question is also being asked. In brief, financial accountability in the public interest has already a huge area of application. The funds required by citizen groups for operating under the concept of delegated authority would represent a relatively small amount, neither more nor less difficult to account for.

The question of accountability should nevertheless not be dismissed on such negative — however comparatively sound — grounds. Its full importance is realized only when one defines accountability in three complementary ways: (a) for financial resources; (b) for programme outcome; and (c) for social outcome. Out of these three, the first one is relatively the easiest to handle as one can create a legal framework for neighbourhood groups, mutual aid associations, etc., operating as non-profit corporations under public audit. In fact, we already have most of the necessary tools in hand.

It is in terms of accountability for programme outcome and for social outcome that we need greater clarity. The entire concept of delegated authority justifies itself only if it can be proved more effective in these two areas than our more traditional approaches. In order to establish criteria for programme outcome, we require measurable benchmarks that can be objectively defined and studied. Such an evaluation becomes feasible when, in each particular case, the joint planning process produces a set of clearly stated objectives. Then the programme outcome can be measured against their achievement or lack of it.

The accountability for social outcome, on the other hand, needs a broader and more subjective perspective as it addresses itself essentially to intangible, non-measurable phenomena.

The satisfaction of the participants, the development of leadership, the perception of one's quality of life and self-fulfillment are very much the central 'qualities' whose presence or absence one attempts to establish.

The intensity and the types of citizen involvement represent an additional set of important variables. We do have techniques, particularly in action research methodology, that permit us to arrive at an approximation of social outcomes. Moreover, as we develop and apply more complete sets of social indicators, we

should be able to assess social outcomes as successfully as programme outcomes.

The question of accountability then must be viewed within the context of all three aspects. This combination would replace the present narrow view of putting the burden of financial accountability alone on a few individuals. It would broaden the concept of personal accountability to include groups, neighbourhoods or communities served as well as extend the concept beyond money considerations.

The assumption behind the use of delegated authority is that it would deliver services, create and run programmes, maintain and improve facilities in a multiplicity of ways that would be more effective and frequently cheaper than if done otherwise. Specifically, governments would continue expanding their administrative apparatus and multiplying their services at a slower rate. Nevertheless, one type of resource on the government's part would have to increase: the consulting services available to citizen groups. This type of support, in addition to funding, would be absolutely required. In this perspective, it is a fair expectation that insofar as the traditional roles of government administrators and supervisors would be replaced by consulting and supporting roles, the relationship between government and citizens would change to becoming more co-operative and constructive in nature.

The effect of adopting the delegated authority concept would, go out beyond changing the quality of people and government relationships. It would, in fact, greatly influence the nature of voluntary associations in our society. The diminishing role of the more traditional associations has been amply documented. The uncertain role of the modern, perhaps more radical ones, fills daily our communications networks. As C. Wright Mills pointed out: "One of the most important of the structural transformations involved is the decline of the voluntary association as a genuine instrument of the public." This trend undoubtedly contributes to the alienation and the apathy often deplored as wide-spread, particularly among younger people.

Were we to pursue the full potential inherent in the delegated authority approach, we would then be implementing policies that maximize conditions favourable to the emergence of strong, responsive voluntary associations, independent leadership and community competence. Citizen involvement would then be taking place not because it was centrally decreed but because people can live it as a necessary and constructive way of achieving their own aspirations. The rejuvenation of voluntary associations through the delegated authority idea would, finally, make it evident that the heart of the matter is not to take power away from the governments as the slogan, "Power to the people", would have it but, in a much deeper way, to re-direct the use of governments' powers and authority in such a manner that our mutual relations, our life styles, our initiative and creative opportunities are facilitated and continually strengthened.



## CHAPTER V

### PROCESS OF PARTICIPATION

In order to use the different participatory techniques with discernment and sensitivity, administrators and planners need a sound understanding of how citizens get together, assess their needs and priorities, develop a plan of action and then press for the satisfaction of these needs or aspirations. In short, the perspective from the governmental point of view, set down in the analysis of Chapters III and IV, requires a complementary perspective from within the citizen group themselves. It is only to the extent that officials grasp the nature of this dynamic process that they can facilitate the daily working of participatory democracy as it manifests itself in the relationship between the government, on one hand, and citizen groups, on the other.

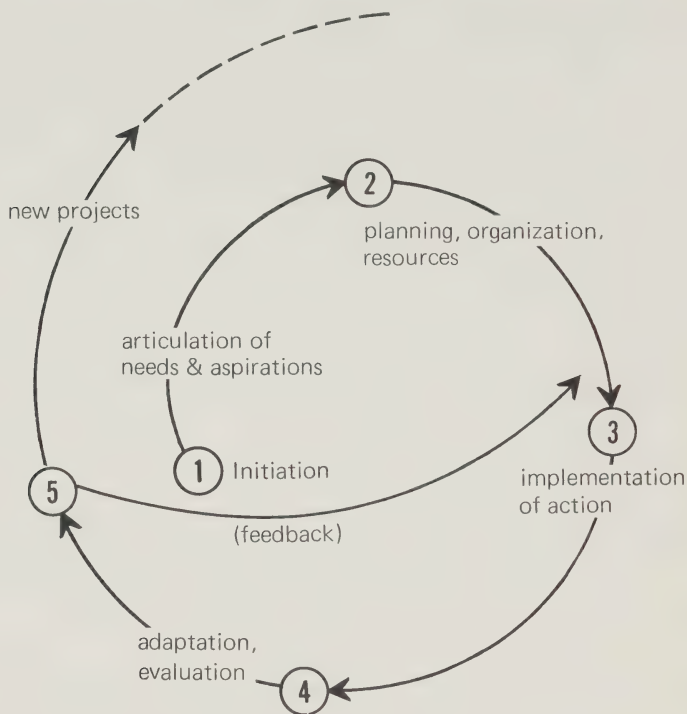
In spite of the fact that at first glance this process appears to assume a variety of forms difficult to classify, it is possible to break it down into stages that are separate and generally applicable. Although the developmental model we shall analyze is a hypothetical one, it corresponds to the empirical evidence we have gathered in Ontario over the last few years.

In brief, the different stages can be identified as follows:

1. **Initiation.** When a group of people meet to discuss a common problem, be it at the initiative of one or two persons, quite spontaneously or accidentally, or as a result of an intervention by a community worker (social animator) or as a result of having shared some educational or training programme.
2. **Articulation of Needs and Aspirations.** Whenever the motivation is sufficiently strong, people tend to continue discussing their common problem in order to reach a better understanding as to what precisely it is and what they can do about it. At this stage, the original group tends to grow as additional persons sharing the same concerns are brought into the discussions.
3. **Organization and Planning.** When the analysis of the common problem is sufficiently advanced, people develop impatience for action and begin to plan for it. They start to develop a more formal organization and mobilize resources (both in terms of time and funds).
4. **Project Implementation.** The program starts, usually in the form of one or several projects, with internal division of labour, co-ordination and leadership.
5. **Evaluation and Adaptation.** The results of the common action are analyzed, evaluated and a new planning takes place to improve the performance of the group and to speed up the achievement of its goals.



So that the dynamic development from one stage to another can be perceived with greater clarity, the process of participation can be represented as an unwinding spiral reaching out to more people and into new situations:



However simplified, the spiral illustrates normal evolution of the process and permits identification of the major types of activities as they logically grow out of each other. To be sure, the stages of growth will be of different lengths and involve various degrees of difficulty. Moreover, when several projects are undertaken, there may be considerable disparity among each of the stages of growth. Finally, many such enterprises never get beyond stages one or two and quite a few die in stage four. The reasons for success or failure point out the importance of these typical variables: motivation, leadership, resources, outside support, perseverance, internal cohesion, ability to produce results, etc. The significant point, however, is that most of these variables can be analyzed, the level of their required quality can be pre-determined and the chances of success can be strongly enhanced by a deliberate, carefully measured support of the process. In brief, one need not be fatalistic about the many failures of citizen groups — on the contrary, these very failures signal quite clearly how success could have been achieved.

Let us now revert to the original perspective in which our analysis is presented and ask what governments can do to support the viability and quality

of each of the stages of growth. It is evident that we proceed on the assumption that governments (a) desire to offer such support as a matter of putting their own policies on participation into effect, and (b) are quite aware that the support will vary with each stage and may be made available in different degrees of intensity.

1. **Initiation.** Whereas among the middle-class and better educated segments of our society, there is little need for specific support at this stage, the typical enabling activity on the part of government can take the form of conferences, meetings, travel grants and workshops. The real problem is in regard to those who for reasons of apathy, despair or alienation (usually also reflected in their low socio-economic status) do not normally enter the process. Such groups are frequently labelled by generic names, i.e., the poor, the native people, the aged, the alienated youth, which distorts the true picture of the situation. It is rather the specific, identifiable sub-groups within these categories that require specific forms of support. Whereas 'poverty' as a problem common to millions of people may well prove to be beyond the means of elimination by any particular government at a given time, it is still feasible and desirable to attack 'poverty' in a specific neighbourhood or among a clearly defined group of people. Experience shows that it is not enough to bring such people together in the hope that they will devise ways and means that would improve their condition. Governments, then, might consider the use of community workers or social animators, offer training sessions for basic organizational and leadership skills development and promote opportunities for frequent discussions. Such support offers no guarantee that corrective action on the part of the people affected by a common problem will automatically follow. Nevertheless, it increases considerably its probability. Without such support, there is little, if any, likelihood that those who are most in need will ever engage on their own in a self-help program, much less in a constructive dialogue with their governments.

2. **Articulation of Needs and Aspirations.** This activity has to be based on adequate information and rational analysis. Governments should make information available and provide consultants experienced in social and economic analysis. Although a certain amount of information may exist in the form of case studies, demographic, economic, or other statistics, population profiles and technical literature, this basic level must be built upon by enabling citizens to engage in community self-studies or in action research. Both of these methods necessitate specific resources and a definite know-how in research. Neither is generally obtainable within the groups concerned. Moreover, as the information has to be analyzed and clearly articulated in terms of options feasible and available, government consultants can increase considerably the rationality and quality of the outcome.

Two aspects tend to be ignored. The first relates to seeing the articulation of needs and aspirations as a learning experience for the participants and as

a vehicle for increasing their motivation to act. For this reason, they must move through the process at their own speed and under their own control, resisting the temptation of letting the outside experts take over. The latter should always remain enablers and catalysts — and it is very much their own responsibility not to accept a different role.

The second aspect concerns the need for using the articulation of needs and aspirations for promoting open, democratic group dynamics. It is at this stage that manipulative, authoritarian leadership patterns are prone to establish themselves, thus vitiating the next stage of growth. The resource persons provided by government can assist a great deal by identifying this danger and by making their knowledge of group processes available, in addition to their other supportive contributions.

3. **Organization and Planning.** Whereas most citizen groups succeed in setting up their organizational structures with a minimum of outside support, conditioned as they are to committee work, etc., in some cases such knowledge may be quite restricted and advice is required about the formal structure options available. This is particularly true where the cultural background is different or the group inclined to experiment with newer, looser structures. There may, indeed, exist a need for clarification which may be offered in the form of consultation. This is particularly true for those groups intending to seek legal recognition. In this case, information will be required on the advantages and disadvantages of several possible structures and their differences in procedure, costs, taxation, status, etc. It is, however, in the area of planning that consultants are most needed. Planning by citizen groups most often takes the form of developing a project proposal. To do so successfully means not only possessing the information required but also the knowledge of funding sources, of their expectations and policies, the skill of putting on paper quite clearly the objectives, the description of activities to be undertaken, the budgets and timetables, etc. In short, the development of viable project proposals is becoming something of an art in our society. Few citizen groups have such expertise at the outset; yet, the latter is crucial to the achievement of their goals and frequently, to their survival as instruments of social change. It is here that consulting services, differentiated according to the fields of action (i.e., pollution, housing, social services, leisure, health, education, etc.), are of paramount importance.
4. **Project Implementation.** Having reached this stage, many groups will underestimate the challenge of living up to the results of their own planning efforts. Having mobilized resources that, on paper, appear adequate, and often, having received outside support and encouragement, the actual implementation may seem relatively easy. This psychological distortion explains in part why so many projects fail to perform according to expectations. Nevertheless, a major part of the problem is often the neglect of certain specific functions that have to be taken care of if the project is to succeed. There is in almost every project, a component of

responsible administration — accounting must be up to standard, records have to be kept, reports regularly released to participants, sponsors and public at large. In short, there arises, often suddenly and unexpectedly, the need for quite technical, sensitive internal management. It is unrealistic to suppose that the leaders who have proved their worth in organizing, motivating and planning would necessarily possess such expertise themselves. To be sure, it is their responsibility to foresee the importance of successfully coping with such administrative functions. On the other hand, to set them up properly and to supervise their performance, the leaders will need outside help. This may take several forms such as consulting, training, or part-time assistance. In many cases, recording and reporting present the most difficulty.

Particularly where government funding is part of the project implementation, it is important that these supportive services be offered and maintained in the interest of both the citizens and the sponsor. The importance of sensitivity and flexibility in the provision of these services are as essential as the expertise itself.

Finally, many citizen promoted projects tend to operate in relative isolation which diminishes their demonstration effect and sometimes frustrates their very purpose. In this regard, governments can assist significantly by promoting contact among similar groups, by establishing linkages with institutions concerned, and by sharing new experience.

5. **Evaluation and Adaptation.** As with the development of project proposals, evaluation of them is fast becoming an area of expertise with particular skills and techniques required. These are most often absent within citizen groups and to make the situation even worse, the groups themselves tend to assign a very low priority to an objective assessment of their project's performance. However understandable, the downgrading of evaluation is exceedingly shortsighted — for citizens and governments alike.

In spite of the possible resistance that a government consultant may meet in the performance of his task, it is feasible to make his presence mandatory in the case of government funding — or to make it a precondition of the granting of other supportive services. A strong argument should then be made in favour of regular, objective evaluation as a requisite of feedback into government policy formulation and as a condition of further support.

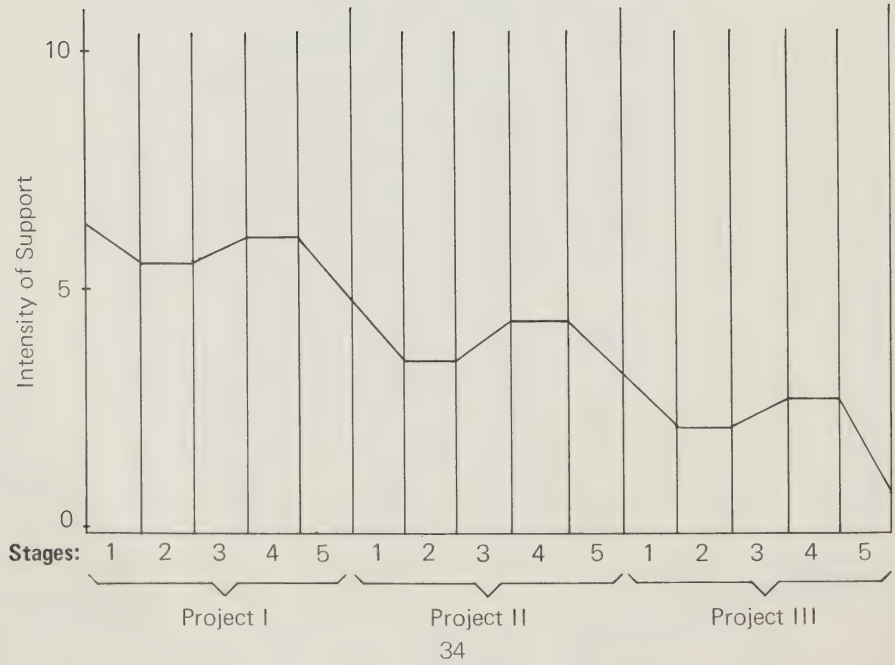
It is likely that evaluation will become better understood and more acceptable as government consultants succeed in translating results into recommendations for improving the functioning of citizen groups so that they may achieve their objectives faster. In short, evaluation should never be dealt with in isolation of the objectives of the citizen group.

Finally, both evaluation and adaptation should not be conceived of as being imposed by a suspicious government. They remain quite clearly the primary responsibility of the citizen groups themselves. This does not, on the other hand, eliminate the obligation on the part of governments to offer such supportive services and to publicize their usefulness. In short,

citizen groups remain free to learn or not to, to succeed or to fail. But it is still the duty of a responsible, democratic government to point out 'why' and to do everything to enable such groups to improve their performance.

Closely related to the consideration of the five stages of growth is the difficult question of how intensive, in fact, government support should be at any given time. The problem of dependency has already been discussed in a previous chapter. The concomitant problem of accountability could easily become confused if the direction and the type of activities undertaken by citizen groups were supported by government to such a degree that the responsibility for the outcome could no longer be clearly assessed. Yet, there is an obvious direct relationship between the outcome and the intensity of support received. As a general rule, the more support there is, the more successful the outcome is likely to be. How, then can one responsibly walk the tightrope between too much or too little?

Although there is some experience, both in Canada and in the U.S. War on Poverty Community Action Programmes, it has not been analyzed and interpreted in any conclusive way. We can, however, use our model and establish hypothetical levels of optimum support over a period of time and draw some conclusions that, then, become flexible guidelines for deciding how intensive governmental support should be.





We are assuming that government is supporting three successive projects of equal scope of the same citizen group, using its supportive services for each stage. For the first project, support required for initiation starts at a relatively high point on our scale of intensity, levels off during the articulation of needs and aspirations, increases in terms of support to planning, organization and funding, then decreases as the implementation gets under way and gradually continues diminishing during evaluation and adaptation. The same pattern is repeated for projects II and III. As the curve indicates, the levels of optimum support continue to decrease from project to project even though it is part of our initial assumption that each project is of equal difficulty and, therefore, requires presumably equal support. This apparent contradiction reflects the fact that, as the group's competence in project development and management increases over time, there is less need for outside support. This is a basic expectation of community development theory. Eventually, the citizen group is using its resources in the best feasible way and the need for outside support diminishes correspondingly. This does not mean, however, that it will disappear completely. It simply levels off at a low point on our intensity scale and its continuation at that level becomes the very condition of optimal functioning of that specific group.

The conclusion one may draw from this hypothetical presentation of the problem, is that levels of support should be geared to both stages of growth of specific projects, and stages of overall competence of the sponsoring citizen group. Support levels are likely to be high at the beginning but must show evidence of gradual decline over time. Every successive project of equal type should require less support. The objective of assessing each stage and viewing it in terms of support needed is to reach the point of optimal use of resources, at which level the supportive services become stabilized. Whenever sudden demands for additional support manifest themselves, it is a signal that there is a dysfunction in the developmental process, always assuming that needs were correctly assessed in the first place. Once the levels of support required are stabilized in regard to any specific project, government is then in the position of considering the technique of delegated authority for its continuation, knowing reasonably well the cost benefit ratio of its investment — politically, socially and financially.

## CHAPTER VI

### A PARTICIPATION POLICY

We have discussed in Chapter V only a few ways in which governments can support citizen involvement as it progresses from the initial expression of interest to the evaluation of specific projects. There already exists considerable experience with a variety of other methods that have been tried over the last few years. Governments have for example hired field workers, most frequently for putting into effect the first two participatory techniques (information-feedback and consultation). They have organized numerous conferences and meetings where citizens, in addition to being informed and consulted, have the opportunity for exchanging views among themselves. They have set up training and leadership development programmes for certain groups. They have offered travel grants and paid the costs for workshops in which needs or aspirations were articulated and cooperative skills developed. They have underwritten the expenditures for community surveys or group self-studies in many fields. Lately, the idea of using informal mixed groups of government officials and citizens for the purpose of enhancing the quality of both the planning and the administrative processes have been put forward and experimented with to a limited degree.

a) **Accumulated experience.** In short, there is a considerable body of accumulated experience, notwithstanding the fact that very little of it has been analyzed and evaluated. However, many of these ad hoc undertakings produced controversial results, increased the level of frustration among participants and were seldom followed up by any change in policies or programmes that could be clearly attributed to them. Rather typically, field workers were caught between a government agency and the citizen group they were supposed to serve. This produced conflicts over loyalty and accountability which has led to an unreasonably high turnover among them. These same workers were seldom properly trained and clear about their precise role.

Often, public meetings were conducted with little prior planning and/or negotiation and became occasions for instant drama, name calling and bickering. Perhaps more importantly, often little or no thought was given to the specific aims of such gatherings. As a result, resolutions, plans of action, or whatever they may have produced, were simply shelved, leading to greater distrust between governments and citizens. In some cases, associations and coalitions of concerned citizens came to life under governments' proddings only to find out that their official godfathers soon lost interest in them and were no longer willing to support them in their formative, sometime unruly, stages of growth.

It is important to recognize that none of the instruments or tools used by governments for promoting citizen participation will in themselves resolve difficulties and problems. Each, in fact, is likely to create many of them, most often in an unpredictable and uncontrollable fashion.

Yet, experiments in participation are continuing, actually growing in scope and numbers. With or without government sponsorship the trend towards greater involvement in public affairs is here and gathering strength. The question, then,

must be asked: What needs to be done to orchestrate the process of participation in such a way that the citizens at large as well as their governments come closer together, develop more cooperative attitudes, in short, use the process to mutual benefit? To discuss how to reach this objective in future experimentation with citizen involvement is the purpose of this concluding chapter.

b) **Need for policy.** The first step may appear an obvious one, though not less necessary. Governments engaged in experimentation with citizen involvement cannot do so responsibly and constructively in the absence of a broad policy on this subject, applicable to all departments, agencies, boards and commissions. Without the formulation of such policy, it is inevitable that experiments undertaken in isolation, sometimes on the spur of the moment or under temporary political pressure, will confuse both officials and the public, will offer inconclusive evidence as to their success or failure and will remain open to the accusation of manipulation. Furthermore, because of the lack of general policy guidelines, there is the danger of inconsistencies among different branches of government, each experimenting with participation in its own way and for its own purpose.

What is required is a firm but broad policy that goes beyond pious statements about participation's desirability. Although much criticism has been levelled against the somewhat simplistic formulation of 'maximum feasible participation' in the United States, there is no doubt that, within the limits of its application, the policy did provide the necessary impetus and legitimacy to a great variety of useful experiments. In Ontario, it should be feasible to articulate a Canadian version of maximum involvement in the two areas that have been the focus of this discussion: government and environment and government and services. In fact, we already possess the basic elements and the problem is to bring them together in one major declaration that would define the nature of the commitment to participation and clarify the boundaries, settings, and problems, where citizen involvement is to be promoted.

Such a policy would also greatly assist in the formulation of a concept of social development in Ontario and contain the fundamental characteristics of what our governments consider to be the nature of modern, democratic citizenship.

The impact of such a policy declaration upon the present situation would be felt at several levels. First, a review of legislation would become necessary in order to eliminate obstacles, open up channels and generally enhance the opportunities for participation. Second, within the governments concerned a similar review of structures and procedures would have to be undertaken. Third, flexible guidelines for internal use would be developed as, without them, the application of a broad policy could still remain a rather risky and inconclusive venture. Fourth, the present attempts of citizens to influence the behaviour and attitudes of governmental decision-makers would be put into a different perspective, in which particularly the problems of legitimacy and accountability could be dealt with in a new way.

c) **Need for guidelines.** Since our discussion here centres upon experiments in participation with government support, we shall elaborate only the level of guidelines which, from the operational point of view, are so important to the success of such a policy. It should be noted, however, that the guidelines themselves will quite obviously necessitate formulation at different levels and for different areas of applicability. Therefore, the suggestions offered here will be at the highest, general level, for all government activities in the areas of environment and services, leaving aside for the time being the need for their more precise interpretation as they are applied to specific problems or situations.

Under a broad policy of increased citizen involvement, such general guidelines could be formulated as follows:

a) citizen involvement in institutional decision-making and institutional change will be encouraged through the maximum use of the appropriate participatory technique;

b) in planning processes affecting the quality of life of a community or a specific group, joint planning will be gradually introduced;

c) in order to permit maximum mobilization of citizen resources and to achieve decentralized decision-making, the technique of delegated authority will be put gradually into effect wherever the effectiveness of government services or programmes can be so enhanced;

d) citizens will be brought into the evaluation of services and programmes with clearly stated channels of feedback into policy formulation;

e) technical and material assistance will be made available to citizen groups characterized by democratic internal structures utilizing self-help approaches where their stated aims reflect a concern with social development in Ontario;

f) all forms of available technical or material assistance will be widely publicized, their accessibility made known and the ways through which to engage in negotiations as to the nature and extent of such support clearly stated;

d) **Need for coordination.** The introduction of such or similar guidelines into the daily business of government would, of course, be no simple matter. Several things would be required. A thorough discussion among politicians, administrators, planners, officials at all levels in order to achieve a basic consensus and understanding of the guidelines' objectives would need to be the first step. Without it, the change in attitude and the flexibility needed in experimenting with the guidelines would not be forthcoming. This process should also be open to citizen participation so that the formulation of each guideline itself would grow out of extensive consultation. When an agreement would be reached and the guidelines ready for official promulgation, the government concerned would have to set up an internal coordinating agency responsible for uniform interpretation, consistent application and planned evaluation of the effect of the guidelines on the functioning of public administration.

Although an interdepartmental committee might play such a role, a permanent agency — with functions within and without the government — would be preferable. Obviously, its role would be an on-going one, beyond simple co-ordination since such an agency would have to be able to provide consultants, organize meetings, establish archives, contract for studies and research and, in a



true sense, serve as the known mechanism in charge of experiments in participation in the entire area of government-citizens relationships.

It is surely not superfluous to underline that the guidelines making the broad policy more explicit would have to be widely publicized, with the firm commitment on the part of the government to enable their spirit to prevail over their letter whenever misunderstandings over their interpretation, hardly to be unexpected, arise.

The importance of the suggested guidelines would consist as much in making policy operational as in creating a psychological climate in the Province necessary for making the experiments in participation more systematic and more effective. As mentioned before, there is considerable experience. Moreover, recent undertakings such as the Public Participation Program of the Metropolitan Toronto Plan Review (Transportation Study) are implicitly putting them into practice. What is required now is greater clarity as to their scope and a firm, public endorsement of their value for making citizen involvement in Ontario feasible and rewarding.

As the Commission to Study the Role of the Legislative Assembly and the government initiatives to establish a viable, decentralized regional framework for Ontario's development go about their business; as the pressure for municipal reform builds in urban centres, particularly in regard to transportation and urban development; as the educational systems continue to review their role in society; as the consumers of goods and services, be they social, recreational or purely economic in character discover their potential strength as consumers — in short as the congruence of all these forces presently in motion increases its pressure upon the remolding of traditional structures and procedures, there is an overwhelming probability that the solutions will have to be worked out in a participatory, cooperative way. Hence, to engage in such an immense enterprise without a serious attempt at establishing the basic rules of the game is clearly dangerous not only for any government in power but for the very texture of our society. Without policies and guidelines, the push towards greater citizen involvement may, indeed, create periods of anarchy and a series of destructive confrontations. In such a situation, to claim allegiance to the ideal of participation without actually engaging in the formulation of its scope, techniques, and supportive systems, is clearly irresponsible.

The heart of the matter in promoting policies and guidelines consistent with increased citizen involvement is, of course, to avoid a situation in which they might be open to the misinterpretation that a certain government is trying to impose participation. Surprising as it may seem, there have been cases, particularly in the developing countries, where massive community development programmes have been launched, with such strong government backing that the very nature of participation as a voluntary act became distorted. It is understandable that wherever such an elusive and difficult ideal is, so to say, unloaded from the bandwagon onto the public place via rigid legislation and a multiplicity of political fiats, excesses can easily be committed and the opposite results achieved. In Ontario, then, this discussion is recommending a pragmatic, experimental approach, clearly thought out in regard to participation's general applicability. To make the approach work, the voluntary character of citizen



involvement must be maintained. The point was well taken in the 1971 "Key Conference" (sponsored by the Central Volunteer Bureau of Metropolitan Toronto) resolution where a request to the Provincial government for consultative services and material support was formulated "for the purpose of giving a wider spectrum to volunteer participation". This, indeed, is the trend to be accelerated. For governments to welcome it and to indicate their responsiveness by supportive policies and guidelines is what needs to be done.

e) **Participation and power.** A second danger, perhaps even greater than the first one of mismanaging the trend towards increased citizen involvement, is in what can be described as the Newtonian view of power. Power, to be sure, is the central focus for many in our society. Nor can any discussion of participation leave the question of power aside since, from the beginning, we have defined participation as all acts that are intended to influence the attitudes and behaviour of those who are *empowered* to make decisions (Verba) . . . The Newtonian view of power is a mechanical one: there is a given quantity of it and if someone is to gain power, someone else will have to lose his. This view seems to be encouraged by our democratic system where one group is in power and the rest is in opposition. Hence, there is an almost instinctive resistance to increased participation on the part of the Newtonian politicians who tend to see it as the growth of power that diminishes, eventually parallels and, who knows, might supersede their own.

This view of power is, of course, overly simplistic. It quite obviously ignores the variety of types of power and their many manifestations. That a legislature is sovereign within its jurisdiction and goes about its business by defining, creating and prescribing power arrangements deemed necessary for the implementation of its law giving functions does not mean that it constantly reshuffles and re-distributes a fictitious, fixed amount of power. On the contrary, the latter fluctuates with history, new powers being set up (as in regionalization, decentralization), others disappearing from the scene.

On the other hand, citizen participation reflects the philosophical ideal that power should be shared to the greatest possible degree. The process often calls the powers-that-be into question on issues related to responsiveness, relevance and need for change. Its major thrust, however, is towards the creation of new power that may be put to new uses. In that respect, participation strengthens the global exercise of power in a given society. Participation therefore may rejuvenate policies, put vigour into institutions, keep democracy alive, create community among individuals and provide a sense of purpose and direction to society.



